



# FEMA

## Village of Ruidoso Wildfire Hazard Mitigation

**Ruidoso, NM** - With funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Village of Ruidoso, New Mexico successfully completed a major mitigation effort to protect its residents from forest fires. This community, with both permanent and seasonal residents, is located by the Lincoln National Forest, adjacent to the Mescalero Apache Reservation. With more than 20 percent of its perimeter adjacent to forests, Ruidoso is a wildland/urban interface community.

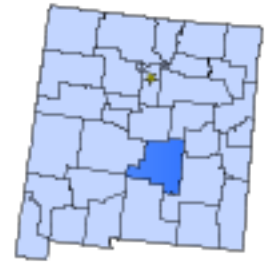
In 2000, because of its location, Ruidoso was ranked first within the state by the New Mexico Forestry Division and second in the nation by the United States Forestry Service for significant risk of catastrophic fire. The major concern was that the forests surrounding Ruidoso contained tree densities with more than 10 times that of a healthy Ponderosa pine ecosystem. These extreme densities cause excessive fuel and unhealthy conditions, which contribute to fire dangers. A forest fire near or in urban Ruidoso could be catastrophic to residential property, water supply, economic vitality, and the population.

Emphasizing the concern was the 8,200 acre Cree fire on May 7, 2000, which started from an escaped campfire in the nearby Smokey Bear Ranger District of the Lincoln National Forest. The fire caused no loss of life but did threaten area homes. The fire resulted in local, State, and Federal emergency declarations. The cost to the Village of Ruidoso was \$6,000,000. Had the fire burned on the west side of the village, property damage and loss of life would have been catastrophic.

"The Village decided to quit 'hitting the snooze alarm' and take action," said Rick Delaco, Director of Forestry. Delaco was hired in 2000 by the Village of Ruidoso as a wildland forester serving an urban community and charged with developing and managing a healthy forest and developing a community forest management plan.

In November 2000, the new Village of Ruidoso Forestry Department began coordinating a multi-jurisdictional land management working group, consisting of nine State, Federal, and local entities, working together to create a wildfire protection plan. "For the Village of Ruidoso, identifying and obtaining the FEMA mitigation grant was a significant contribution to this comprehensive fire management and community protection effort," commented Delaco.

In 2002, the Kokopelli fire caused no loss of life but did destroy 29 homes. In 2003, the Village of Ruidoso applied for funds from FEMA to mitigate, or lessen, potential fire sources in public lands near residents by reducing sources of ignition. Crucial to the Wildfire Hazard Mitigation plan submitted is the concept that fire can be beneficial to the forest. "Fire in a forest, which is too dense or contains unhealthy trees due to vegetation or overpopulation, can be dangerous. Ideally forest fire should be low to the ground and be restricted from moving up to the tops of trees where it will burn at the mercy of the wind," explains Delaco.



Lincoln County,  
New Mexico



### Quick Facts

Year:

**2000**

Sector:

**Public/Private Partnership**

Cost:

**\$389,427.00 (Actual)**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Land Use/Planning**

Primary Funding:

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**